

(Calling All Tempeh Lovers

Here are more ways to get started with this nutrient-rich soybean food, along with recipes and variations using grains.

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OVER 3,000 PEOPLE have asked us for tempeh starter, the dried culture that gets this soybean fermentation going, since our offer first appeared in the January '77 OGF. We sent everyone a packet with enough to make several batches, but we were just too busy getting the starter in the mail to answer all the questions about making tempeh.

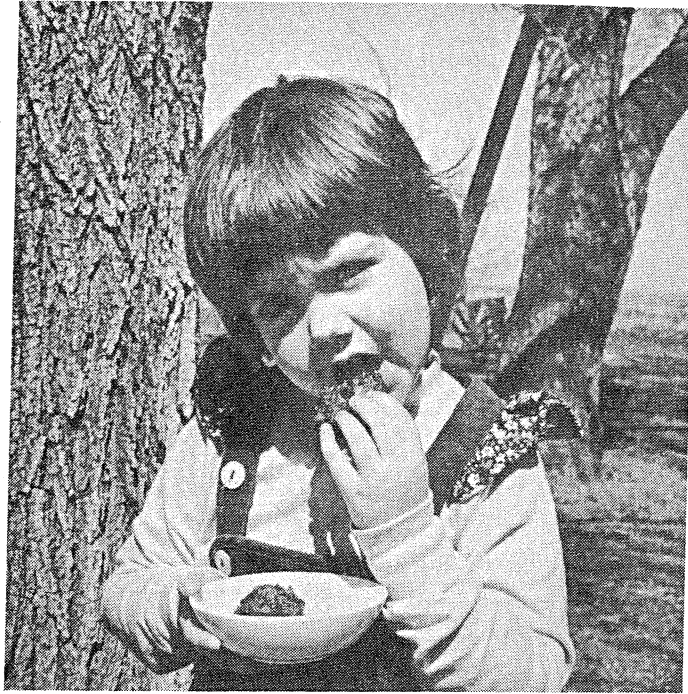
More than anything else people wanted to know if there wasn't a way to keep their tempeh going at home. We didn't have a good answer to that one — ours is always made under laboratory conditions. So we began to work out a way to do it. Now that we are satisfied with a technique, we want to pass it along to everyone. We'll also take this opportunity to answer the other most asked questions.

There are two ways to maintain a tempeh supply. The beneficial mold

that makes tempeh can keep growing by getting more fresh soybeans to work on and by making spores. The only practical problem with simply adding some active tempeh to your next batch of beans is the remote possibility of bacterial contamination. A few bacteria are bound to get in, and their numbers multiply each time a new batch is made. Eventually these outsiders prevail, and the beans won't form into a tempeh cake.

There isn't much you can do to keep them out. But here is the procedure that has given us good results: First prepare a pound of dry soybeans as directed for making tempeh. In a blender, mix an ounce of active fresh tempeh with one to two tablespoons of boiled but cooled water to make a thin paste. Then mix that paste with the prepared beans, and pack and incubate them as usual. Try to reduce to a minimum the time any of these ingredients are exposed to open air. In successive batches, watch the quality of your starter tempeh for bacterial contamination very carefully, or you may waste a pound of beans. A good tempeh cake is

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Tempeh is a fine snack, replacing sugar-laden cavity-causers with good-tasting protein for a real pick-me-up. Tempeh has the natural, crunchy, nutty flavor that candy bars are always trying to imitate.

This incubator is used in commercial production of tempeh by Gale Randall in Omaha, Nebraska. Randall has a small home business producing tempeh, and custom-built his incubator to meet his large-scale needs.

clean-smelling and rather firm.

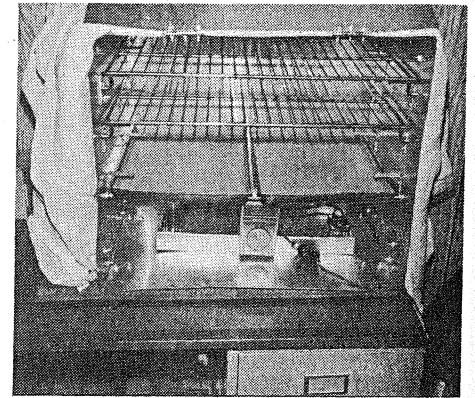
Another way, which we much prefer, is to make your own special starter with rice. You need a pressure cooker, mason jars, and milk filters which will replace the lids of the mason jars. If milk filters are not available, they can be made by putting cotton between two layers of gauze. The thickness of the cotton is about $\frac{1}{8}$ to $\frac{1}{4}$ inch, and it serves to keep dust and bacteria out of the jar, but allows the mold to breathe. You can then make your own starter by following these simple steps:

1. Place $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of white rice in a mason jar (pint or quart), add one ounce of water, mix well, cover with milk filter in place of the lid, and put the screw top on.

2. Let the jar stand at room temperature for one hour, and shake it every 10 to 15 minutes so that the rice will take up water uniformly.

3. Cook in a pressure cooker for 20 minutes with 15 pounds of pressure.

4. Shake the jar to break up the rice lumps, cool and add $\frac{1}{8}$ teaspoon of tempeh starter. Put back the filter and



screw top, and then mix well by shaking.

5. Lay the jar on its side to spread out the rice, and place it at 86 to 88 degrees F, for four days. At that time, rice should be covered with black spores. Pulverize the spore-covered rice in a dry, clean blender for one to two minutes until it looks like uniform dark-gray granules. The starter is now ready for use. Put the rest of the starter back in the mason jar, and cover the jar with filter, lid and screw top. Then keep the jar in a freezer; the starter can be kept for many

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months — it will not lose vigor.

This starter is much more potent than the one that we sent to you, because we have diluted ours with wheat flour. You really need only $\frac{1}{8}$ teaspoon of this starter to make tempeh from one pound of dry soybeans. Mix a very small amount ($\frac{1}{8}$ teaspoon) of the starter in two teaspoons of cool, boiled water, and add to beans prepared for tempeh. Cover the mixing bowl with a plate or a piece of plastic film, and vigorously shake the bowl for ten to 15 seconds to thoroughly mix the starter and beans. Pack and incubate as usual.

TEMPEH VARIATIONS

Tempeh-type products can be made from wheat, oats, rye, barley and rice, as well as from any of these in combination with soybeans. They all possess a pleasant odor, a desirable color, and a good taste. All grains are slightly cracked or pearly, rinsed with water, soaked for 30 minutes at room temperature, and boiled for ten to 12 minutes. Cool, inoculate, pack and incubate as you do with soybean tempeh. Other beans probably would be good to make tempeh-type products, but we have not tried them.

It is not necessary to scrape any of the mold off — it disappears in cooking. But you must cook tempeh before eating. Tempeh slices can be deep-fat fried, sautéed or roasted. One reader wrote to say that she sautéed tempeh cubes and used them in salads as croutons. Tempeh patties cooked like hamburger have been used in sandwiches. It is also good in your favorite soups or casserole dishes.

Tempeh does not have to be cooked and eaten the day it is made. It can be kept in a refrigerator for a day or so, or in a freezer for a few months. After thawing, tempeh tends to break up when sliced. So, if you are going to freeze tempeh, it should be cut first.

Many asked if they could use the soy grits widely available in stores. Al-

most always these are defatted grits and are not satisfactory. The most suitable form of soybeans for making tempeh is the full-fat, cracked bean (about four to five pieces per bean). Smaller grits, about half the size of a rice grain, can also be used to make tempeh; however, a greater amount of protein and other soluble nutrients is lost during cooking.

NUTRITIONAL VALUE OF TEMPEH

The amount of proteins and the protein value of soybean tempeh are the same as that of the soybeans. Vitamins such as niacin and riboflavin in tempeh are greatly increased; thiamin or vitamin B₁ may be slightly decreased. As for vitamin B₁₂, there is not enough information to indicate its presence in tempeh or soybeans. At the present, neither tempeh nor soybeans should be considered as a source of vitamin B₁₂ in a vegetarian's diet, but we are looking into the matter.

SEND FOR TEMPEH STARTER

The Northern Regional Research Center can no longer send out small packets of tempeh starter. They were happily surprised by the response to tempeh, but are not staffed for that type of work. However, OGF has arranged to continue distribution of tempeh starter prepared by Dr. Wang and her colleagues. The NRRC has agreed to send us batches of free starter, which we will distribute with a charge to cover handling. We hope someone will soon offer a good starter commercially. Meanwhile, for tempeh starter, along with complete instructions for preparing it and building an incubator, send 50 cents to: Tempeh Starter, 33 E. Minor St., Emmaus, Pa. 18049.